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Remarks

Claims 15 through 20 and 22 through 26 stand rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by DE '646. Claims 21, 27 and 28 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over DE '646. The Applicant respectfully disagrees with this rejection, since the DE '646 patent is not prior art with respect to the instant application.

In particular, the instant application is a PCT nationalization of an international application filed on September 5th, 2003 and claims Paris Convention Priority to a German application filed on September 21st, 2002. Therefore, in accordance with 35 USC 363 as well as 35 USC 119(a), the effective date of the patent for purposes of 35 USC 102(b) is 21st September, 2002. The DE '646 utility model was patented ("eingetragen") on November 21st, 2002 and therefore does not constitute prior art with respect to the instant application.

The US PTO is respectfully requested to perform a new search of prior art and to issue a non-final Office Action.

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Respectfully submitted,

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